

Snapshots 2004

Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.



June 18

California

Volunteers Help San Diego and Riverside County Fire Education and Readiness

The Bureau of Land Management's California Desert District conducts a variety of fire mitigation activities across Southern California. The Palm Springs South Coast and El Centro field offices administer public lands in San Diego, Imperial, and Riverside counties. To help kick-off new and expanding outreach efforts and interagency cooperation BLM recruited two Student Conservation Association teams in 2004.

Each Student Conservation Association team leader will work throughout a 12-month period to establish relationships with stakeholders and communities in the wildland urban interface. The target area of these efforts will include high risk areas (mutual threat zone) adjacent to the Palm Springs South Coast, and El Centro, field office lands.



BLM Fire Prevention Truck in front of private home surrounded by flammable vegetation in San Diego County. This was a target area for Student Conservation Association outreach.

Beginning in early June, a three person crew will build on the established relationships over the summer to enhance homeowner fire safety and community awareness. The teams will actively engage communities by offering home assessments and promoting fire safety at public events. Their goals are to educate communities about fire safety, prevention, and preparedness and how to implement these activities in a collaborative manner with local government and fire service agencies.

A Geographic Information System specialist will work hand-in-hand with the teams to create a computerized map that will assist fire service personnel across San Diego and Riverside counties. The map will show fire hazards, access routes, addresses, and fuel loading in the mutual threat zone. All of this data will be collected in the field using Global Positioning System technology and Student Conservation Association labor. The end result will be a highly valuable planning tool for the prevention and mitigation of wildland fire and will be shared with the California Department of Forestry and local volunteer fire departments.

Contact: Clayton Howe, BLM Fire Education/Mitigation Specialist (858-676-0894) or Siobhan Girling, SCA Team Leader (208-860-7825)

Wildfire Fuel Breaks- A Lengthy and Dangerous Chess Game for the Town of Julian

In a checkerboard pattern of homes and wildland vegetation, fuel breaks are placed at strategic locations to oppose the challenge of wildfire.

In the 1960's, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection began removing dead trees and brush to create a wildfire fuel break along the ridgeline east of the town of Julian. Creating and maintaining the Sunrise Fuel Break included the use of mechanical equipment, hand crews, and herbicides. Over the last 20 years, budget and other constraints had slowed efforts. That is, until wildfire made its move.

In 2002, the Pines Fire burned approximately 62,000 acres, and in 2003, the Cedar Fire destroyed up to



Without wildfire mitigation activities, many homes were lost during southern California fire siege of 2003.

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Sunrise Fuel Break.



Sunrise Fuel Break with BLM fuels crew working through trees.



Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office Fuels Crew.

collaboration. The local newspaper printed an article after the Cedar Fire that recognized the great effort BLM has made in protecting their

community. BLM plans to continue collaborative efforts with the community to maintain and expand the Sunrise Fuel Break as necessary to reduce the risk and loss to wildfire.

Contact: Ron Woychak, Fire Management Officer, Palm Springs- South Coast Field Office (858) 451-1705

281,000 acres. Julian lost over 600 structures during that 2 year period. Strategies to protect the community have been an ongoing challenge with its growing urban-wildland interface and an aggressive fire history.

In 2003, the Bureau of Land Management and California Department of Forestry proposed re-establishment of the Sunrise Fuel Break. The north end of the fuel break was the first priority where new homes had been developed. California fire officials worked with landowners to reduce fuels on the private lands, while BLM used their fuels crew and a dozer with a brush rake to thin a public land portion of the fuel break.

Fuel reduction and wildfire mitigation activities are not a game. It is an ongoing challenge that requires

Student Conservation Association Work Pays Off for Shelter Cove

During the summer of 2003, the King Range National Conservation Area, managed by the Bureau of Land Management's Aracta Field Office, hosted a Fire Prevention and Education Team from the Student Conservation Association, which we called "Team Lost Coast". Among their many duties, Team Lost Coast collected Global Positioning System data consisting of structure, road, and fire hydrant locations in the town of Shelter Cove, California. Shelter Cove is a federally listed community at risk, with approximately 400 homes built within the scar of the 1973 Finley Creek Fire. The team created detailed maps using Geographic Information Systems software for pre-suppression planning purposes and of which would soon be of high value to the community.

Early last September, 72 lightning fires were burning along California's north coast within the California



The Honeydew fire during daytime.

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Same view during night hours.

Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Humboldt-Del Norte Ranger Unit. Within 48 hours, seventy of the wildfires were contained, the remaining two were located on the King Range National Conservation Area and Humboldt Redwoods State Park.

In the early morning hours of September 17th, the Honeydew Fire had grown from 400 acres to over 1,500 acres. On September 18th, the California Department of Forestry Humboldt-Del Norte Ranger Unit ordered a Type One Incident Command Team to take over management of the fire, which within a day, grew to over 9,000 acres and was posing a significant threat to the community of Shelter Cove. Residents witnessed smoke columns rising to 12,000 feet above sea level during the day and 200 foot flames within miles of their community at night. The incident command team immediately began work on structure protection and evacuation plan for Shelter Cove.

Jenny Sharp, leader of Team Lost Coast, provided the maps and data collected earlier in the season, and it proved invaluable to the planning efforts. The data was utilized by the

structure protection and evacuation planning group to quickly create operational maps.

The Honeydew Fire was contained on October 3, 2003, after burning a total of 13,778 acres. Fortunately, the structure protection and evacuation plan for Shelter Cove never had to be enacted, but the

residents slept easier knowing that all of the pre-suppression planning had prepared them for just such a scenario.

Contact: Tim Jones, Fire Management Officer, Arcata Field Office (707) 825-2306

Rural Fire Assistance Funding Helps Volunteer Fire Department Save the Day

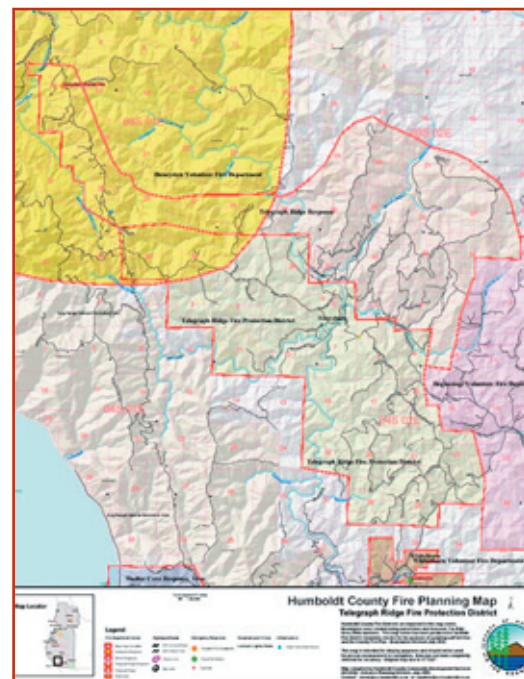
In 2003, the Telegraphy Ridge Volunteer Fire Department located in Humboldt County, California, received Rural Fire Assistance funding from the Bureau of Land Management for a "slip-on" unit that would upgrade their light fire engine with a pump, tank, and hose reel.

In September, the northern California coastal range experienced a significant lightning event that led to 72 wildfires. An occurrence that is unexpected in Humboldt County, which sees this scale of lightening activity only once every fifteen years.

The lightening started in Sonoma County and moved slowly up to coast. By the time it reached Humboldt County, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection was spread thin. The bulk of fire suppression resources had been assigned to other counties, leaving Humboldt County feeling vulnerable. But, with the newly upgraded fire engine, the Telegraph Ridge Volunteer Fire Department was able to respond to six different fires and contain them within the first operational period.

Chief Peter Lawskey of the Telegraph Ridge Volunteer Fire Department asserted "The new apparatus worked flawlessly, giving us the ability to safely and successfully engage and suppress these fires."

All of these fires were located within the wildland urban Interface. One was located on BLM land and the remaining five had the potential to spread onto other public lands.



Map of Telegraph Ridge Fire Protection District.

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The small amount of Rural Fire Assistance money that funded this fire department's engine upgrade has proven to be worthy investment for BLM and the community.

Contact: Tim Jones, Arcata Field Office
(707) 825-2306

Eastern States

Jackson Hotshots Making a Difference

When the Jackson Hotshots reported on board in May 2004, not only did they stay busy completing their 80 hours of required training, they found time to perform some outreach to people in three local communities.

First, they spent the day in Jackson, Mississippi at the Baptist Children's Hospital cancer wing. They talked to the children about life as a firefighter and just spent time with them to play video games, watch television, and talk. Children's smiles made this day worthwhile.

Next, they spent a day with second graders at the St. Francis Catholic School in Greenwood, Mississippi. They started the day with a presentation about Firewise for homes, and what it takes to be wildland firefighter. The balance of the afternoon the hotshots did tasks ranging from help with schoolwork to working in the kitchens.

They also spent an afternoon building new wheelchair ramps for a local hospice care facility in Brandon, Mississippi.

Eastern States views community outreach as an important part of being a Jackson Hotshot crew member. It is important to not only disseminate information about fire prevention but to show that we are part of the community and that we are stakeholders in its future.



A young cancer patient and crew member concentrate on a video game.



Jackson Hotshot crew members taking part in activities.



St. Francis Catholic School second graders with hotshot crew members.



Jackson Hotshots get some kitchen duty time.